

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /076 W

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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INFO AMCONSUL MEDAN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 17201

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, ID

SUBJECT: REPORTERS' IMPRESSIONS OF BURU ISLAND

DETAINEE RELEASES

1. SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFFS DEC. 23 THREE MEMBERS OF FOREIGN PRESS COMMUNITY DESCRIBED THE DEC 20 DETAINEE RELEASES ON BURU IN MIXED TERMS. WHILE THEY VERIFIED THAT THE 1500 RELEASEES DID IN FACT DEPART BY SMALL BOATS FOR SUBSEQUENT SHIP TRAVEL TO JAVA, THEY WERE CRITICAL OF LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE DETENTION CAMPS AND HAD NO RESPECT FOR CAMP OFFICIALS. INDONESIAN REPORTERS WHO COVERED THE RELEASES ON BURU REPORTELY DID NOT SHARE THESE VIEWS AND WERE CRITICAL OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FOREIGN PRESS EAGERLY RECORDED THE COMPLAINTS OF MANY INTELLECTUALS AMONG THE RELEASEES WHO APPEARED BITTER AND STILL UNREPENTENT. END SUMMARY.

2. DAVID JENKINS (FAR EAST ECONOMIC REVIEW), HAMISH MCDONALD (WASHINGTON POST), AND GUY SACERDOTI (FAR EAST ECONOMIC REVIEW, BUSINESS WEEK) RELATED TO EMBOFFS DECEMBER 23 THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF THEIR VISIT TO BURU ISLAND LAST WEEK WHICH INCLUDED THE DEC 20 RELEASE
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CEREMONIES OF 1500 CLASS B DETAINEES. THEY REPORTED THAT THE 1500 RELEASEES DID ACTUALLY DEPART FROM THE DETENTION CAMPS BY SMALL BOATS WHICH WOULD CONNECT WITH TWO SHIPS BOUND FOR SURABAYA. CONDITIONS ON BURU, HOWEVER, THEY FOUND DEPLORABLE BY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, AND THEY STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE COMMANDER OF THE DETENTION FACILITIES AND HIS STAFF FOR BEING

UNRESPONSIVE, INCOMPETENT, AND VENAL IN THEIR ADMINISTRATION. MEDICAL CARE, THEY ADMITTED, WAS "QUITE GOOD".

3. THEY REPORTED THAT THE RELEASEES WERE ALLOWED TO TALK TO REPORTERS AND ANSWER QUESTIONS, AND MOST OF THEM DID SO QUITE FRANKLY. MOST OUTSPOKEN ABOUT THE HARDSHIPS OF CAMP LIFE AND THE MISTREATMENT THEY HAD RECEIVED AT THE HANDS OF BRUTAL GUARDS WERE THE INTELLECTUALS SUCH AS FORMER EDITOR OF BINTANG TIMUR HASYIM RACHMAN. RACHMAN SPOKE AT GREAT LENGTH IN BITTER AND UNREPENTENT TERMS, SAID REPORTERS, AND ACCORDING TO JENKINS HE WAS BEING FILMED MUCH OF THIS TIME BY TV TEAMS FROM GERMANY, THE UK, AND AUSTRALIA. THE FOREIGN REPORTERS PRESENT WERE VIRTUALLY OVERWHELMED BY A TORRENT OF COMPLAINTS, COLORFUL ANECDOTES AND HORROR STORIES FROM THESE ARTICULATE FORMER DETAINEES, ALMOST ALL OF IT BASED ON INCIDENTS WHICH OCCURRED SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THE RELEASEES REPORTEDLY WERE IN AGREEMENT THAT TREATMENT HAD IMPROVED MARKEDLY IN RECENT YEARS, PARTICULARLY SINCE 1974.

4. JENKINS SAID THE ATTITUDE OF THE INDONESIAN REPORTERS PRESENT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THEIR FOREIGN COLLEAGUES. MANY OF THEM CHIDED THE FOREIGNERS FOR THE WAY IN WHICH THEY EAGERLY NOTED
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DOWN ALL THE SENSATIONAL COMPLAINTS OF THE RELEASEES, POINTING OUT THAT THESE SAME PEOPLE HAD MADE LIFE MISERABLE FOR ANTI-COMMUNISTS WHEN THEY WERE IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE IN THE EARLY 1960'S. SEVERAL INDONESIAN REPORTERS TOLD JENKINS THAT THEY AND THEIR FRIENDS HAD BEEN HOUNDED FROM THEIR JOBS BY HASYIM RACHMAN AND BINTANG TIMUR IN THOSE DAYS. THEY WERE ALSO LESS CRITICAL OF CAMP CONDITIONS, WHILE THEY SAID DID NOT COMPARE THAT UNFAVORABLY WITH THOSE OF MANY INDONESIAN COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE, AND THEY DID NOT CONSIDER CAMP OFFICIALS AS UNRESPONSIVE AS THE FOREIGN REPORTERS DID.

5. UK AMBASSADOR HAS RECEIVED PERMISSION TO VISIT BURU IN EARLY JANUARY AND WILL SHARE WITH US HIS IMPRESSIONS.
MASTERS

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Sent Date: 23-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
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